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New classes arrive at Penn High School P-H-M adds new design, engineering courses.

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MISHAWAKA -- From designing residential floor plans, landscapes and furniture layouts to designing buildings, Penn High School students next school year will have a chance to explore the world of sawdust and nails with the click of a mouse.

It's all part of curriculum changes for Penn High School's 2008-2009 program of studies, which the Penn-Harris-Madison School Corp. board of trustees approved just a few weeks ago.

A new semesterlong design processes class will teach students in all grade levels residential construction design through Home Design Software, said James Langfeldt, who will help teach the course with Brad Robertson.

That class appears to be a good addition based on government statistics showing the number of construction industry jobs is expected to grow 10 percent through the year 2016, compared with the 11 percent projected for all industries combined.

In addition, rising numbers of immigrants, as well as the children of baby boomers, will generate demand for homes and rental apartments. Employment is expected to grow even faster in nonresidential construction over the decade, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. "Anytime we can give students an opportunity to experience cutting-edge software," Langfeldt said of the new course, "that is an important opportunity."

The software addresses floor plans and mechanical layout to budgeting and interior design - a good springboard for the many high school students who arrive with a construction career goal in mind, Langfeldt said.

The software also allows students to take a virtual tour of the home and landscape when the home layout is completed. Penn's goal is also to make community partners in the construction field to expose students to real-world projects, Langfeldt said.

The design processes course, he said, can serve as a "lead-in" course for many other classes in the technology division, such as a new architecture and civil design course that places the construction of whole buildings and communities at students' fingertips.

The course's teacher, Mike Maciulski, will undergo extensive training this summer, technology division leader Donald Monhaut said. The class will be the fifth "Project Lead the Way" course at Penn High School -- a national program that also provides an introduction to engineering design, principles of engineering, digital electronics and aerospace engineering studies, he said. "It's basically to meet the needs of business and industry," Monhaut said of the popular hands-on pre-engineering curriculum that aims to make math and science relevant to students.

As technology continues to advance, Monhaut said, Penn officials are hoping to give more students dual credit opportunities through local colleges such as Southwestern Michigan College, Ivy Tech Community College and Indiana University South Bend.

A new marketing course -- likely the first offered at Penn -- also will debut next year, sparked by an informal survey of students, business teacher Stephanie McElwrath said. There, students will have to do their own market research, create a product, develop it, price it and market it to their classmates.

The creative business class for sophomores through seniors will appeal to those who are interested in seeing how "Nike and iPod got to be such giants in their worlds," McElwrath said. Indiana has more small-business owners than any other state, she said.

"I teach the students that everything they do is marketing," McElwrath said. "From dating, to making a sports team and applying for a job. Marketing isn't just used in popular businesses; it is used every day by almost everyone."
